

FAR WEST OPTICAL

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OREGON OPERATIONS OFFICE

U.S EPA
805 SW Broadway, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97205

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AUG 24 2016

RE: Harbor Comments

EPA-REGION 10

The Portland Harbor section of the Willamette River was designated a Superfund site by the EPA in 2000. The city and the government has known about the severe pollution of the river for decades, but nothing has ever been done about it. I am the owner of Far West Optical, a business here in Portland, and I have been in business for forty-two years. While my business is not located on the Willamette River, I understand why other local business owners are concerned about the EPA's recently proposed plan to dredge contaminated sediment from the bottom of the river. Steps should have been taken to deal with the pollution forty years ago, when it would have cost much less. Now is not the right time to begin a costly cleanup project that could take decades and cost the local community more than one billion dollars.

In addition to being a small business owner, I am a geologist and I am very concerned about the plan that the EPA has proposed. They plan to dredge 167 acres and remove 1.9 million cubic yards from the Willamette and transport it to a landfill. As a study found in 2014, natural processes at work in the Willamette have already reduced contaminant levels by at least 40%. The contaminated sediments, once they're compacted by these natural processes, usually won't leach out. Digging up the river like this disturbs the entire environment and could send contaminants further downriver, where they would affect smaller towns. Everything that you stir up here will just become a future Superfund project somewhere else. Furthermore, what's their guarantee that when their project is done, the problem has truly been taken care of? I don't see this ending well for the Willamette River or the local community.

The cost for this project is also prohibitive. The EPA's most recent estimate puts the price at \$746 million. The taxpayers and businesses of Portland will have to bear this incredible cost, while the companies that caused this pollution won't have to pay for it. This is a problem that should have been dealt with decades ago, but there has got to be a better way to deal with this issue than dredging the river for years. Instead, we should focus on cleaning the most highly contaminated areas first and then reassess the condition of the river. This is a smarter approach that could cost much less. If you're going to fix part of the river, fix the part that needs it.

Furthermore, the EPA claims that the cleanup will generate jobs. While this might create some jobs, there is no guarantee that they will go to Oregon residents. It will also harm local companies that rely on the river and waterfront. We deserve to be able to use the river and waterfront for recreational activities. We need a plan that would help clean the most heavily polluted areas of the Willamette at a reasonable cost that won't send contaminants further down the river.

Sincerely,

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Owner

(b) (6)

Portland, OR 97220